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FEB 26 2024

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
Candice Crane, REPORTER

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Hearing on 08/19/2021

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TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO-RECORDED

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PUBLIC HEARING OF THE

10 **STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE**

11

AUGUST 19, 2021

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HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI

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1 MR. BECKETT: Um, we had, um, a [inaudible]
2 schedule to start at 6:00 and we have those that are
3 watching [inaudible] so we're going to go ahead
4 [inaudible] there maybe a few more people coming in as
5 -- as we -- as we're going. Uh, before we get started,
6 uh, I wanted to just thank all you for being here.

7 Uh, just let you know that the joint committee
8 holds public hearings to receive suggestions and
9 recommendations of how to [inaudible] redistrict
10 itself and it's [inaudible] congressional districts,
11 uh, during the course of these hearings around the
12 state, uh, as -- as chair, I'll give the members of
13 the public an opportunity, uh, to address it, maybe
14 and -- and give any concerns or any suggestions that
15 they might have, uh, concerning the re-districting
16 efforts.

17 Uh, a custom we try to give, uh, members of the
18 public, uh, free opportunities to say what -- what
19 they wish. Uh, in -- in cases where it appears that
20 are going to be, uh, many persons who are -- who are --
21 -- who are to speak. Uh, we do limit their time, um,
22 as-- as the [inaudible] be up to chair, depending on
23 how many persons wants to speak.

24 Uh, I do just want to, uh, to mention that, uh,
25 we're here to take your comments and your suggestions.

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1 We're not here to ask you questions. Um, this will not
2 be the only opportunity that -- that you have to
3 present your comments, but if you have something
4 [inaudible] that you want lay with us, uh, we'll be
5 glad to do that, or at an appropriate time, I'll be
6 giving you addresses, uh, where you can, or you can
7 mail in your comments, or -- or anything that you
8 might have.

9 Uh, just as a brief reminder, just because
10 there's may be some confusion out there based on the
11 number of inquiries we've had at other places and just
12 a reminder, we do not do county or municipal
13 redistricting and stuff. So we're going to make every
14 effort to not splitting precincts. We're not -- we're
15 -- we're going to the very minimum we have to -- to
16 comply to the requirements of law, the vast majority
17 of the split precincts that -- that publish
18 [inaudible] had a lot that I had to deal with as well.

19 But, you know, it would be because the county is
20 going to move to precinct lines after we do our
21 redistricting. It will not be because we're splitting
22 precincts because they're split after we draw the
23 lines. And there's -- they're just -- they're
24 complying with the requirements that they have to, is
25 that's something that cannot be avoided and therefore

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1 it's just -- it's just the nature of one person.
2 One vote that, um, you know, that would enable
3 [inaudible] these districts that this is something
4 that's not going to be [inaudible], we're going to do
5 everything we can to not do it on the district we
6 draw. Okay. At this time. The chair I would -- I would
7 call this public hearing of the joint reapportionment
8 committee, joint congressional redistricting committee
9 to order and ask my council to call the roll of the
10 members present.
11 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Mr. Packet.
12 MR. PACKET: Here.
13 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Black [ph]. Mr. Brown. Mr.
14 Eubanks. Mr. Ford. Mr. Mango.
15 MR. MANGO: Here.
16 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Reed.
17 MR. REED: Here.
18 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Shine.
19 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Taylor. Mr. Wyatt. Mr. Kirby.
20 MR. KIRBY: Here.
21 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Bryan.
22 MR. BRYAN: Here.
23 MR. BECKETT: Mr. [inaudible].
24 MALE: Here.
25 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Hops.

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1 MR. HOPS: Here.

2 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Parker. Mr. Simmons.

3 MR. SIMMONS: Here.

4 MR. BECKETT: Mr. Tate.

5 MR. TATE: Here.

6 COUNSEL: Mr. [inaudible]. Mr. [inaudible].

7 MALE: Here.

8 MR. BECKETT: All right, thank you, counsel. I
9 also just want to remind you that -- that we did not
10 have to have a quorum to take testimony. Uh, the roll
11 was taken just for the purpose of documenting, uh, who
12 is present. We have members from all over the state
13 and we're doing these hearings all over the state.

14 So some people choose not to attend a hearing
15 [inaudible] residence. Uh, we have members of this
16 committee and members of the, uh, of the [inaudible]
17 that are watching the proceedings tonight. So they are
18 -- they are paying attention to what's going on. They
19 just -- everyone just might not -- not be here. Uh, in
20 addition to the members, maybe, uh, I know that we
21 have other members of the, uh, house of senate that
22 are here with us tonight. I want to give them an
23 opportunity to introduce themselves.

24 INTERVIEWEE: [Inaudible] committee [inaudible].
25 My name is [inaudible] and welcome to the [inaudible].

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1 MALE: [Inaudible] representing the [inaudible]
2 county.

3 MR. BOAK: John Boak, Senate district 44.

4 MR. BECKETT: All right. I -- I [inaudible].
5 Okay. Um, [inaudible] I represent, uh, north
6 [inaudible] county [inaudible] District 101.

7 MALE: [Inaudible]. Yeah, John, sorry.

8 MR. BECKETT: All right. Thank you, gentlemen.
9 Um, uh, I appreciate, uh, [inaudible].

10 MR. WATSON: Parsley Watson, [inaudible] district
11 103 [inaudible] county.

12 MR. BECKETT: Sorry vice chairman. I didn't see
13 you come in there. Um, [Inaudible], Missy. Okay.

14 MISSY: Missy [inaudible] I represent district
15 102 with the central [inaudible].

16 MR. BECKETT: All right. Do we have anyone else?

17 MALE: [Inaudible].

18 MALE: Mr. Chairman.

19 MR. BECKETT: Yes.

20 MALE: Thank you. Thank you so much Mr. Chairman.
21 [inaudible] opportunity to talk to someone [inaudible]
22 who wanted [inaudible] to know that he would have been
23 here, but he is in fact recovering from COVID right
24 now. So [inaudible].

25 MR. BECKETT: All right. Thank you for saying

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1 that. Uh, and [inaudible] for various reasons cannot
2 be here. There's either the illness or illness in the
3 family, or -- or just other -- other obligations. Uh,
4 in -- in addition to our members, I want to thank our
5 staff, both the [inaudible] staff [inaudible] staff
6 for their work in that -- and not only making these
7 meetings possible, but [inaudible] documents that --
8 that you have, and that we will -- we have -- that we
9 will have going forward.

10 And I want -- I want to thank, uh, [inaudible]
11 for -- for providing this place for us -- for us to
12 meet. It's awfully gracious of them to -- to make this
13 available to us. And almost -- I -- I guess, all of
14 our hearings around the state [inaudible] and our
15 universities our community, are -- are branches of the
16 university. So I -- I want [inaudible] our system for
17 their cooperation. And, uh, I think it is appropriate
18 that the public hearing should be a public institution
19 and so, uh, so we thank you for that.

20 Um, you know as we get started, uh, our staff has
21 gone through the transcripts of the meetings that were
22 done back in 2010. And this is the eighth meeting in
23 our series of nine that we're going to have this time.
24 And I've kind of reviewed the [inaudible] commonly --
25 commonly resented themes in all these meetings and

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1 concerns that people might have.

2 And -- and they -- they've been [inaudible]
3 enough to give me those [inaudible] and before we get
4 started, before I open it up and -- and [inaudible]
5 you all to ask whatever it is that -- that [inaudible]
6 the statement is that you would like to make. Uh, a
7 few of the things are, you know, why -- why re- --
8 redistrict?

9 And you know, that seems very fundamental to
10 those of us, but, uh, you know, it is not, maybe not
11 so obvious to -- to the public that's not -- not as
12 involved with it, but I just want to point out that
13 both our federal constitutional requirements for one
14 person, one vote requires us to redistrict both our
15 congressional districts and our legislative districts
16 every 10 years. So following the census, the federal
17 constitution requires to do that.

18 And also in addition to that section 254 of our
19 state constitution of 1890 requires that we redistrict
20 the legislature. So it was not a matter of choice or
21 it's not optional the way we do this it's the
22 requirement that -- that we -- that we do it. Because
23 -- because it's things that will become obvious if you
24 take a look at -- at the maps. But you know, it just
25 is [inaudible] when began, uh, redistricting and you

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1 know, that has -- that has started already.

2 Redistricting actually began with the -- with the
3 census. And people first responding to the census,
4 because that's what it was all -- it was based on the
5 census data.

6 And so you -- you then the [inaudible] July 1,
7 the was the organizational meeting of the committees.
8 And then, um, then we started this series -- this
9 series of hearings.

10 And we started them earlier this month before we
11 actually received, uh, the formal file -- file data.
12 And, uh, we started with estimates and you might ask
13 why don't we actually start with the estimates one, is
14 -- there a couple of reasons one, is the estimates
15 are, have been used in the past, and it really
16 provides us our roadmap as to what parts of the state
17 have gained population and what parts of the state
18 have lost population.

19 So it's at very beginning stage where we're at
20 redistricting you provided us with the information
21 that we needed. Last week, uh, another set of data was
22 -- was given that it was really [inaudible] more
23 accurate is [inaudible] number.

24 Now, the -- the federal government reserves
25 [inaudible] on September 30th they will send us

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1 another set of -- of numbers. And it may change, but
2 probably will not change from the ones we received
3 last week.

4 There are a couple -- couple of things that --
5 that could happen that where they might have to move
6 small amounts of population around [inaudible] for
7 99.9 percent of the people [inaudible] anytime to
8 change at all.

9 And so, uh, uh, but we had to -- we had to bring
10 [inaudible] and because the qualifying deadlines next
11 -- are next year for our congressional districts. So
12 in efforts of congressional redistricting will come
13 first.

14 And what occurred during th- -- this fall of the
15 year, fall of this year [inaudible] we will be working
16 on the legislature during the months of the 2022
17 legislative session. And so [inaudible] congressional
18 so they can qualify in January. Then we'll go to the
19 legislative districts, uh, because we don't fall out
20 till the following year. So we have a little more time
21 on the legislative districts.

22 Uh, because of -- because of that time crunch,
23 um, we had to go ahead and get started. Um, you know,
24 you may ask because of population shifts, um, we're
25 going -- we're going to face challenges.

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1 I think anyone that gives serious consideration
2 knows that -- that even though our state population
3 didn't really shift a lot, didn't -- we -- we got
4 6,000 less people than we had with almost 3 million
5 people less and very minor changes. [Inaudible] very
6 small difference in the number of people in our house
7 districts and number of people [inaudible] districts.

8 But within that, people moved a lot. Um, the same
9 -- uh, people just don't live in the same places they
10 did. So -- and because of the requirements we have the
11 district will change, a great -- a great deal.

12 And -- and [inaudible] your area loss population
13 or gain population presents unique challenges
14 [inaudible]. And we're -- we're sitting here today in
15 an area that both has counties that gain and lost
16 population. Both.

17 So we're going to [inaudible] we were on the Gulf
18 coast yesterday and all the counties are gaining
19 population basically. Um, but most [inaudible] a few
20 places that were on the counties lost population.

21 But most of them are like this, where you have
22 some that gain and some that -- some that lose. Uh,
23 the exhibits that are set up the posters outside this
24 -- this auditorium in the hall will give you an idea
25 of the areas that gain population and lost population.

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1 Uh, some -- some were relatively the -- the same.

2 Some lost a lot. Some -- some gained.

3 [Inaudible], uh, we had one district gain almost 49
4 percent in 10 years. We had one district that lost 21
5 percent in 10 years.

6 So as you can tell there were some -- some --
7 districts [inaudible] movement. Uh, we had certain
8 parts of the state that lost a lot more than other
9 parts of the state. And then, but it only had a few
10 pockets of growth primarily in what you would call
11 more suburban areas.

12 And so, um, but they don't -- they all present --
13 all present problems that we'll have to deal with.
14 And, you know, why -- you know, we just were presented
15 as [inaudible] with the -- with the estimates.

16 And now we've got more accurate information. Um,
17 the, uh, you don't know how many that -- how many
18 members of the public participate in the process. And
19 there are -- there are several ways I want to inform
20 you that [inaudible] one is by discussion or concerns
21 of this hearing.

22 Uh, you know, we're -- we're here to hear your
23 concerns. This evening we'll listen to any manner that
24 you wish to bring to our attention about how and where
25 we were drawing congressional and legislative

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1 districts. Um, where members -- members of the public
2 will know that they -- they need to sign a card with
3 your name on the card. The staff has the cards
4 [inaudible] they have them on that side.

5 And for some reason that -- that you decide you
6 want to speak or -- or you didn't get a card, just let
7 -- let the staff know, and they -- they have the
8 cards. And be -- be sure to do that. And that's just
9 simply because I [inaudible] and I won't be able to
10 call on people [inaudible]. And so that's -- that's
11 the reason, uh, we -- we asked to have -- have him
12 identified. Um, another -- another thing, uh, you can
13 submit your suggestions to -- to this committee in
14 writing or by email.

15 Uh, you may think of something when you go home,
16 you may not be prepared. You may have more email
17 information. You may have some kind of follow up
18 comment that you could submit it either by -- by mail
19 or email, and I'll provide that information in just a
20 minute. Uh, you can -- you can take advantage of the
21 opportunity to use maybe public access, computer
22 terminals.

23 There'll be a -- there'll be a [inaudible] at the
24 side that the public can actually come in and -- and
25 work on -- on these terminals. And -- and here, you

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1 know, and these huge [inaudible] concerns that maybe
2 you need to hear from the public.

3 And basically just anything that is your concern.
4 Uh, it is probably not going to be the first time
5 we've heard that concern, for -- for a lot of them, it
6 might be something that we've heard each one of the
7 hearings, but that doesn't matter. It's your concern
8 -- it's your concern.

9 Uh, uh, just an example of some things that --
10 that people bring up with our voting rights, that
11 concern. We have, uh, concerns about splitting the
12 precincts. We -- we've -- we have concerns about
13 splitting of municipalities. Uh, we have, uh, talked
14 about the districts that are odd shaped. [Inaudible] a
15 variety of -- of concerns that individuals have, uh,
16 as a reminder that the rules of the house govern joint
17 committees.

18 And -- and, uh, meetings and we -- and we will
19 handle such matters as a house [inaudible] members of
20 the public context maybe we can provide information or
21 [inaudible] on the public, uh, access computers. And,
22 um, you can send -- you can send your information by
23 US Mail to Ted Booth, staff counsel, joint
24 reapportionment committee. PO Box 1204, Jackson,
25 Mississippi 39215-1204.

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1 Or you can send an email to ted.booth@peer --
2 that's p-e-e-r -- .gov and, uh, I'll read that out to
3 you simply because we do have people that are watching
4 that don't have access to these working materials that
5 you already have. And even though the address is all
6 there, some of the other people, uh, might want to --
7 to use the address for something else.

8 Um, so and when -- if you use -- if you send an
9 [inaudible], uh, please provide information for the
10 staff to follow up, uh, such as email address or
11 telephone number because if -- if -- if they're going
12 to get back with you they need some way to get in
13 touch with you. And so provide that contact
14 information.

15 Um, just and provide a public access for
16 congressional redistricting will ~~it~~ will commence
17 following the delivery of the final PL-94-171
18 [inaudible] which should arrive at the close of
19 September [inaudible] final numbers that they cannot
20 change anymore. There'll -- there'll -- there'll
21 [inaudible] to work with at that point in time. And
22 there should be here at the close of September. Um,
23 and the public access time will last for three weeks.

24 And, um, so that will begin for September and
25 will run for three weeks. For the legislature, it will

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1 occur after January 1, 2022 and last for three weeks.

2 All right, um, at this time is there anyone on the
3 committee that has anything they would like to add?

4 All right. Well, thank you.

5 At this time, we will -- we will begin with, uh,
6 with taking in the comments that we have from -- from
7 the public. And the first one that I received is, um,
8 [inaudible], um, [inaudible] I'm sorry about that. Uh,
9 [inaudible]. And I would like to ask each person if
10 your speaking to come down to the mike. And that's not
11 just for us, that's so the people watching can hear
12 also.

13 MS. SORALDO: Great. Am I talking into the mic?

14 MR. BECKETT: Yes.

15 MS. SORALDO: Can you hear okay?

16 MR. BECKETT: Yes.

17 MS. SORALDO: Great. Hi. I'm Peggy Soraldo [ph].
18 And that handwriting is a result of 12 good years of
19 education. Thank you for meeting our community here
20 today. My name is Peg Soraldo. I am the president of
21 the Legal Women Voters Pine Belt. I'm a retired
22 attorney. I live in Hattiesburg, I'm a registered
23 voter.

24 The Legal Women Voters Pine Belt is a nonpartisan
25 group that works closely with the Forrest County NAACP

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1 and other non-partisan groups to educate and work with
2 our communities to ensure equal rights for each and
3 every one of us. Today, I and the League of Women
4 Voters and fellow concerned citizens, are requesting
5 from this committee that there be transparency in the
6 redistricting process here in Mississippi.

7 We would like the entire process to be made
8 public. The most important issue is transparency of
9 the re-distributing maps drawn before finalizing of
10 these maps. Currently, in the United States House of
11 Representatives, [inaudible] 81 has been introduced
12 requiring state redistricting entities such as
13 yourselves, to publish information regarding
14 redistricting plans both before and after adoption of
15 a plan.

16 Which includes massive congressional districts,
17 the composition of the districts by race, language,
18 minority groups and political party. Explanation of
19 the entities reasoning for adopting the plan and any
20 dissenting statements of the entities' members. We are
21 requesting a public hearing and opportunity for a
22 written public input after redistricting maps are
23 proposed and before they're voted on.

24 We understand that pursuant to federal and state
25 laws these redistricting maps must be nonpartisan,

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1 must have equal rights for all citizens. Each district
2 must have equal populations and a minimal splitting of
3 political boundaries.

4 It took many lawsuits for us to be here in
5 Mississippi, where we are today. We are a better state
6 than that. We need to show our citizens through
7 transparency that the appropriate legal redistricting
8 map is being -- before it's been presented to the
9 legislature.

10 This committee I was mentioning before that you
11 all are very popular on YouTube. I have seen seven out
12 of your eight, uh, hearings, and they've been
13 terrific. You've shown your intent to do right by
14 Mississippi by taking the time to conduct these nine
15 hearings within a matter of three weeks throughout
16 Mississippi.

17 I understand that your staff is already working
18 on the redistricting maps. I understand there's
19 already been private committee meetings regarding the
20 maps. We understand that time is of the essence. What
21 we need now is for the citizens of Mississippi to have
22 an opportunity to review these maps. The Pine Belt
23 community will continue in its efforts to assist this
24 committee in working on redistricting here at
25 Mississippi, thank you again for your time.

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1 MR. BECKETT: Thank you, Dr. Westland.

2 DR. WESTLAND: [Inaudible] slipped [inaudible] a
3 little low, but I'm blessed to be here. I'm blessed
4 that every one of you all have taken the time whether
5 you had to or not. But you are here smiling and you're
6 -- you're thinking about what we're going to be
7 talking to you about tonight. And I could say, uh, you
8 know, I've been here over 40 years. I finally can say,
9 I'm not from Houston, Texas, because I've been here
10 for 40 years.

11 But the proud thing that I can say is that, uh,
12 I'm a retired teacher, I'm a mother of five adult
13 children, five grandchildren. Uh, I've tried to stay
14 busy with the NAACP political action executive board.
15 And, um, executive board of the Boy Scouts [inaudible]
16 area council. I am a member of the League of Women
17 Voters.

18 And I lean back where it is. But, uh, wha- --
19 what I want to say then more importantly is that I
20 love Hattiesburg and Pine Belt, and I want to see good
21 things happen here in Hattiesburg, in the Pine Belt
22 area. And I can trust you. I can see that you will
23 also look forward to doing that as well doing the best
24 that you can for this area. I have one
25 question/comment, I guess, not at this point in time.

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1 And, uh, what I have to ask and again, maybe
2 comment as well, is this, given history of voter
3 suppression in Mississippi and the weakening of the
4 1965 Voter Rights Act, what steps have you taken as a
5 legislative redistricting committee to address the
6 confidence that minority voters will have that their
7 vote count and that they will be able to have a, and,
8 uh, a level of equity in voting for their candidates?
9 And I say confidence because we all know that we can
10 be given the facts.

11 We can look at the vaccination rates in our state
12 and know people can be given all kinds of facts, but
13 what [inaudible] have seen is that you go for the
14 community. You go for leaders in that community;
15 pastors, teachers to go and talk to the people to give
16 them more than just facts, but to give them their
17 concerns, to give them their encouragement, to give
18 them their -- and share their faith that things can
19 get better.

20 So what I wanted you as a committee to look at
21 is, again, go beyond the facts, look at the commitment
22 that you made from the heart. And that's all I can
23 expect you off.

24 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Lawrence.

25 MR. LAWRENCE: Uh, thank you. Uh, I've got some

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1 handouts here. I was going to say if I could give
2 these to you all [inaudible], uh, but I don't have
3 enough but I want to [inaudible] as well. Um,
4 [inaudible], uh, [inaudible]. Um, so, um, this is a
5 really crappy hand out. I get that, um. I -- I worked
6 all day and then did this in like 30 minutes, uh, or
7 30 minutes is way too long.

8 I -- it didn't take me that long [inaudible].
9 It's my favorite gerrymanders in the state of
10 Mississippi, which my very favorite one if you look at
11 the top left photo of -- right there in the middle, it
12 looks like an elephant drinking the boat [inaudible].
13 Um, so basically I just wanted to illu- -- illuminate
14 some things about this gerrymanders.

15 If you look at the top right picture, it's, uh,
16 the Pine Belt, Hattiesburg. Hattiesburg has five
17 senators that are in touching the city of Hattiesburg,
18 taking votes out of the city of Hattiesburg and the
19 state Senate. At the same time, we have about enough
20 people for one Senator, right? But instead we have
21 zero essentially. And then we have a bunch of
22 [inaudible].

23 If you look at the last picture on the bottom
24 right it's Jackson looks like somebody just punched a
25 mirror. And the -- the -- the lines just cut into the

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1 city and disenfranchised people with these lines. If
2 you look at the, uh, bottom left, it's just a big
3 swath in the middle of the state. There isn't a single
4 city in Mississippi that is contained [inaudible]
5 Senate district. They are all cut out.

6 And I think you all know that when people look at
7 these maps, they know exactly what's going on. You're
8 not fooling anybody by saying that, oh, historical
9 lines, we should do this, do that. People know that
10 one party is trying to dilute the vote in certain
11 places and concentrated in other places. And you all
12 have an opportunity to show people that Mississippi
13 has changed, not just the flag, not just the symbols
14 that are coming down, but actually changed.

15 And that you guys represent that change. And then
16 you all can do something about it. THERE are three
17 rules that I put down at the bottom to help you all
18 and guide you through this process. That when people
19 look at the map of Mississippi, they might say, oh,
20 that makes sense.

21 The first thing is that, a municipality that has
22 enough people to contain an entire district shall
23 contain as many whole districts as its population will
24 maintain no dividing up the big cities into fragments,
25 keep the cities together. A municipality -- the second

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1 rule, a municipality that has fewer than the number of
2 people for an entire district shall be contained in
3 one single district whenever possible.

4 And in districts with adjacent unincorporated
5 areas, otherwise, it should say otherwise at the end
6 of that sentence, if it doesn't sorry about that. Uh,
7 it's going to [inaudible]. The point is to keep small
8 cities within the same district if possible, the
9 third, is unincorporated areas even those in different
10 counties shall be contained in districts with other
11 unincorporated areas whenever possible.

12 And in districts with adjacent municipalities
13 otherwise. The idea is that people even across county
14 lines that live in the rural areas outside of cities
15 will have more comm- -- in common, and need a unifying
16 representative. As it is, I live in a district where,
17 uh, I get to share a Senator with people, uh, in
18 Louin, Mississippi.

19 I don't even, uh, I don't even know - I've never
20 even been to Louin, Mississippi. Uh, it's -- it's
21 nowhere near my house. I don't, you know, we don't
22 have things in common. And I -- I just think that you
23 all can take this moment to really do something to
24 change this map to where it makes sense. Don't think
25 about how it will benefit your party politically.

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1 Think about how the people of this state deserve equal
2 representation under the law and under the electoral
3 system that you all put in place.

4 You have a duty, and I hope that you fulfill it
5 to the people in Mississippi. Um, I didn't give an
6 introduction. My name is Matthew Lawrence. I'm an
7 attorney here in town. A long time ago I used to study
8 geography here at the University of Southern
9 Mississippi. The first person I ever heard say,
10 gerrymander was professor Mark Miller. I think he's
11 still around.

12 Um, and then I studied gerrymandering part
13 intensively at UC Hastings when I was in law school.
14 But, uh, yeah, you know, obviously these aren't hard
15 and fast rules. They aren't things that you have to
16 do. You can throw them away, not even think about
17 them, but I think the people of the state would
18 appreciate it if you did consider them. Thank you.

19 MR. BECKETT: Thank you very much. Uh, Toni
20 Johnson.

21 MALE: [Inaudible] city. As many as the city will
22 maintain so Jackson could have like four basically
23 [inaudible].

24 MS. JOHNSON: Good evening. Uh, my name is Toni
25 Johnson, here in two capacities. I'm a [inaudible]

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1 election commissioner in Hinds County, and I also work
2 for a, uh, nonprofit who's also nonpartisan,
3 Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable. And we wanted to
4 speak on the importance of fair redistricting, um,
5 from the standpoint of women's economic security
6 throughout the state.

7 Um, without proper redistricting wage gaps,
8 access to better healthcare and adequate education
9 would not be possible. So we just wanted to leave you
10 with a few points, um, from our standpoint, why
11 redistricting should be transparent and fair. Um,
12 Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable is an
13 organization focused on civic engagement and advancing
14 the lives of black women and women throughout
15 Mississippi by affective policy.

16 Black women make up a large percentage of voters
17 throughout the state of Mississippi. Based on the
18 census data the 2021 wage gap between black women and
19 non-Hispanic white men is 63 cents to every dollar, 49
20 percent of Mississippi women make up about 49 percent
21 of the overall workforce.

22 Yet they make up nearly two thirds of workers
23 being paid minimum wage. We believe that [inaudible]
24 redistricting lines will help reduce the wage gap
25 brought about by black women being underpaid. Again,

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1 black women, more districts in the state of
2 Mississippi are more commonly single parents and heads
3 of households resulting in a higher need to access
4 quality education and healthcare. We urge fair and
5 transparent redistricting. Thank you.

6 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Um, Nicole Jordan.

7 MS. JORDAN: I yield the floor.

8 MR. BECKETT: Okay. Thank you. MS. Margaret
9 Shelton.

10 MS. SHELTON: My name is Dr. Margaret [inaudible]
11 Shelton. I'm an educator, retired and I have serious
12 concerns about the redistricting and a some have
13 already noted that my concern is of -- is about
14 gerrymandering and whether I heard about the influx,
15 the decrease and increase in population. But I'm
16 seriously concerned that gerrymandering will enter the
17 picture and I believe it's already here.

18 Um, my next concern is about the education of the
19 minorities or the education of the population and the
20 education does not reflect the culture, the
21 multiracial, multiethnic, um, population that we have
22 here in the state of Mississippi and particularly in
23 Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

24 Um, I'm also concerned about, um, the wages of
25 women as others have already stated, um, the fair

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1 sharing of, um, the distribution of money you see,
2 based upon pop- -- uh, based upon the increase and
3 decrease the population. I would like to know and get
4 some assurance when you are doing your math about the
5 infrastructure, money that's coming to Mississippi and
6 how it's going to be distributed and who going to
7 benefit from it.

8 Um, and as I said, I -- the educational system in
9 Mississippi need upgrading. It is not up to par and in
10 many instances it's substandard. Um, and I can go on
11 and on in terms of that. And then we have people that
12 are elected to office, and regardless of whether they
13 are Independent, Republicans or Democrats.

14 They cater to those who are members of their
15 party when they call town meetings, or when they come
16 back to inform the citizens about what is going on in
17 Washington, what is going on in Jackson. Those of us,
18 they do not inform us.

19 We don't get newsletters; we don't get anything.
20 And so this is a measure that need to be corrected and
21 I hope that you are taking this very seriously about
22 what we are saying about gerrymandering, because that
23 already exists here.

24 Also in terms of some of the violence that's
25 still going on in the state of Mississippi should also

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1 be corrected. And I have -- I have a long list that I
2 don't think I have time, and I don't want to take up
3 everybody's time about this.

4 And I too would like to be informed and about the
5 redistricting and before you vote on it and -- and
6 before anything else happened that we as citizens or
7 giving information in print as possible, that we make
8 our input prior to any, uh, voting.

9 MR. BECKETT: All right. Thank you very much. Uh,
10 Donald Bentley [ph].

11 MR. BENTLEY: Oh, uh, thank you for having me
12 [inaudible]. Uh, I'm Donald Bentley and I'm here
13 representing Black Lives Matter Mississippi, the
14 nonprofit. Um, I want to express some of the concerns
15 that we have as far as transparency and, um, the whole
16 process [inaudible] gone about it historically. Um, we
17 want as many people as possible to be involved in this
18 process.

19 We wanted to be seen as -- by as many people as
20 possible. Um, as said before by some of the people
21 previously up on this thing, um, some of the city --
22 some of the larger cities in the state are broken up
23 unfairly and should be looked at seriously.

24 Um, this process dictates how we spend our money
25 in this study. It dictates how we invest and in this

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1 state, we are paying attention. The young people in
2 this state are paying attention. Please, please make
3 this a fair process for all of the people in
4 Mississippi. Not just a certain political party,
5 please. Thank you.

6 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Um, um, Rob [inaudible].

7 MALE: [Inaudible] first time.

8 MR. BECKETT: Oh, Rob's first time. [Inaudible].
9 I appreciate it, thank you. [inaudible].

10 MR. WOLF: Mr. Chairman, committee numbers. My
11 name is Robin Wolf, I'm a native of Hattiesburg,
12 serves district 4 supervisor for Forrest County since
13 2001. In 2005, I was the lead planner on an
14 unsuccessful challenge to the legislative
15 redistricting plan adopted in the year 2000. In your
16 2000 -- on your 2000 census, I would go to [inaudible]
17 the litigation was as it is now, and effort to create
18 a majority, minority Senate district centered in
19 Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

20 The second largest majority, minority community
21 in the state of Mississippi, while the legislative
22 redistricting plane adopted after 2010 census did
23 create a majority, minority senatorial district,
24 including parts of Hattiesburg, Senate District 34,
25 something that not what the doctor ordered from the

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1 perspective of our community. Why? Specifically,
2 Senate District 34 was adapted -- was adapted in
3 perspective of our community.

4 It was adopted unnecessarily diluting the voter
5 strength of the minority voters in the city of
6 Hattiesburg while ignoring all the important
7 traditional redistricting criteria, such as compact
8 adhering to existed -- existing political boundaries
9 and preservation of communities of interests. And
10 explicitly large majority and minority precincts in
11 the city such as the Blair Precinct, Dixie Pine
12 Central, and the majority influence precinct such as
13 Highland Park, Pine Crest, were assigned to center
14 District 45.

15 Carving out over a third of the black vote -- the
16 black voting age rather in the city. Instead of
17 cutting all the city minority and majority precincts
18 into one in the city of Hattiesburg in our
19 metropolitan area, the legislator- -- the legislature
20 yoked our community with rural minority voters in
21 Jasper County 40 miles away in three counties over.

22 As a result, minority voters of Hattiesburg
23 constitute under 22 percent of the Senate District 34.
24 34 [inaudible] and have been -- have not been able to
25 influence [inaudible] determine the election of their

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1 Senate -- of their state Senate. This is simply
2 unacceptable for a community with a population of over
3 half of the ideal senate district size.

4 Accordingly, please accept this letter as my
5 formal request on behalf of the community I represent
6 to adapt a majority, minority Senate district. Senate
7 on the city of Hattiesburg, consistent by the mandate
8 -- consistent by the mandate of the US constitution
9 and traditional redistribute principles. I appreciate
10 your time and your attention. I want to thank the
11 committee for what they are doing, but I'm asking you
12 [inaudible] personal to right a wrong.

13 This never should have been done 10 years ago. We
14 went before the court and the court said let's give
15 the state a change to do the right thing. The court
16 said let's give the state a chance to do the right
17 thing and this is what she came up with.

18 I don't know which one of you or how many of you
19 were serving at that time, but I'm asking everybody on
20 this committee to write this wrong. I thank you for
21 your time, I thank you for being here and all that you
22 have [inaudible].

23 MR. BECKETT: Did you say you have a handout?

24 MR. WOLF: Yes, sir. I do have a card.

25 MR. BECKETT: [Inaudible]. Thank you. Uh, Ron

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1 Hancock.

2 MR. HANCOCK: I'm going to stand back from this,
3 there's a little bit of feedback. You guys will still
4 here me like that?

5 MR. BECKETT: Yeah.

6 MR. HANCOCK: We don't have microphone control.
7 Um, I hadn't planned an introduction, but I think it
8 might be worth at this point. My name is Ron Hancock.
9 I'm a resident of Hattiesburg. I am a small business
10 owner. I have several, um, healthcare clinics in south
11 Mississippi, the coast and here.

12 So I, um, decided where to open this business and
13 -- and partner with other small business people based
14 on demographic -- demographic information, the same
15 information that you will be using, making your
16 decisions -- this big decision coming up. So I have a
17 vested interest in our community. Um, I was part of
18 the brain train that happens every generation.

19 When you get a degree from Mississippi, you leave
20 when you're that age. But I came back because I had an
21 opportunity here, but I made a promise to myself that
22 when I came back here, I was going to make a change.
23 All the reasons I left Mississippi, the frustration I
24 had with the status quo at the time I was going to
25 change that when I came back.

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1 So that's part of the reason that I'm here today.
2 That is my motivation for sharing my thoughts with you
3 today. With respect to the redistricting as required
4 from time to time that we have a new census and the
5 data that you'll use it is my hope that the newly
6 defined districts will reflect the true demographics
7 of the area they encapsulate.

8 Mississippi is about 50 percent white and 50
9 percent nonwhite. And when I say non-white, non-white,
10 um, Americans of African descent, Asian descent,
11 native descent, and Latin X and mixed race. So your
12 demographics will show 60, 40. Mixed races always fit
13 into a box. It's about 50/50.

14 If you look at our elected state bodies with
15 [inaudible] Jackson, you would think that Mississippi
16 comprises all white men with a polite margin of women
17 and persons of color. I urge you to look around the
18 next time you're either in session in either house of
19 the senate and you'll see pretty much the same thing
20 in either body, 70 percent, white, 30 percent black.
21 Those are the numbers.

22 If you just count and look at the faces on the
23 website, that's what you're going to see. That's not
24 reflective of the state of Mississippi. It does not
25 reflect the population we have here. Anytime we have

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1 an organization that represents a larger body, it
2 should be reflective of that larger body, that
3 community. It has never been. Just because it's never
4 been doesn't mean it always should be that way.

5 Okay. How'd it get that way? Well, it's been that
6 way for a long time since reconstruction. Uh, the
7 house, the Senate, along with local and state election
8 officials have done everything in their power to keep
9 as many white people in power as possible. That is to
10 say, to suppress the black voice.

11 Drawing fair and reflective districts is the only
12 way to break up this good old boy system, which has
13 remained in power for far too long and suppress the
14 voices of those who have not had representation in the
15 state Capitol, and likewise in the nation. I implore
16 you to please do the right thing, draw the districts
17 fairly and without prejudice. We no longer have room
18 for prejudice in Mississippi. Thank you, committee
19 members.

20 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Um, Reverend Junior
21 Richardson.

22 MR. RICHARDSON: [Inaudible]. Good evening.

23 MR. BECKETT: Good evening.

24 MR. RICHARDSON: Chairman Becket and this
25 community and this committee. I'm Dr. Junior

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1 Richardson. I share with the Silver Engagement
2 Roundtable, uh, One Voice, uh, the NAACP. I am the
3 president [inaudible] NAACP and I'm also a pastor, uh,
4 [inaudible]. Um, say [inaudible] District 47 and House
5 of Representative 106. Um, uh, my concern [inaudible]
6 is pretty much what everybody has said today.

7 Um, as we look back over history and time, um,
8 that have been a great consensus, uh, for the
9 [inaudible] voting, uh, from the beginning, uh, from
10 reconstruction, it hasn't been structured where we
11 could only have a select few at the table. Uh, even as
12 I look around your committee tonight that still holds
13 true.

14 So that fewer minorities are at the table. And I
15 understand when the Obama administration, uh, the
16 Supreme Court struck down Section 4 of the Voting
17 Rights Act, which stated that, uh, when you did the
18 redistricting that the justice department had it
19 pretty clear to make sure that at least 51 percent,
20 uh, you know, district had a minority district.

21 Well, what that simply means Chairman Becket is
22 they gave one minority at the table. Uh, but that's
23 still not enough to be a whole voice of the people
24 that you're representing. So tonight, um, all concerns
25 again mirror, um, many of the individuals who have

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1 came before me tonight, um, such as a supervisor
2 would. Every 10 years the state of Mississippi begins
3 the redistricting process.

4 Redistrict is one of the most critical aspects of
5 our democracy. It determines how [inaudible] to elect
6 public officials that will represent the interests of
7 our communities. Therefore, it is important that the
8 state of Mississippi engages in a redistricting
9 process that is fair and transparent. Residents of
10 Forrest County here and the [inaudible] county, which
11 I represent New Orleans [inaudible] how an unfair
12 redistricting process contributes to voter
13 suppression.

14 If we ought to honor our fundamental rights to
15 participate in this political process, then districts
16 must be drawn in accordance with Section 2 of the
17 Voting Rights Act of 1965. The [inaudible] that
18 discriminate on the basis of race, that means
19 districts should not be racially gerrymandered,
20 stacked, packed or cramped.

21 We're asking this committee to comply with the
22 federal law and to provide community stakeholders with
23 regular updates about the redistricting process. Thank
24 you for your time.

25 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Minister Barbara Danport

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1 [ph].

2 MS. DANPORT: Good evening.

3 MR. BECKETT: Good evening.

4 MS. DANPORT: I am Minister Barbara Danport, co-
5 director of [inaudible] Family Development Center of
6 Jones County, which lies in the fourth congestion
7 district. We are a member of the Mississippi Civic
8 Engagement Roundtable led by One Voice, which has a
9 history of advocating for fair, transparent, and
10 accountable redistricting practice.

11 We appreciate the opportunity to -- to appear
12 before you today and thank you for allowing us to
13 share our position. My family and I have lived in
14 Jones County in the community of [inaudible] for many
15 years. Which I do understand the redistricting process
16 is important. After all, it locks us into voting
17 districts for the next two years.

18 I also understand that if the lines are drawn
19 unfairly, it could mean that our voice and our vote
20 won't matter for the next 10 years. Re-districting has
21 become a concern for me because of my commitment to my
22 community and voting rights. I am a believer that my
23 vote is my power. When there's a threat to that power
24 my vote must become my power. Over the past 10 years,
25 redistricting has cracked my community, impacted my

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1 family, our schools and the surrounding community that
2 I share.

3 We have streets used as diviners for voting
4 districts. One neighbor vote at one precinct and
5 directly across the street neighbors vote in a
6 different precinct. I believe that splitting up
7 communities of interest takes away the communities'
8 ability to work together in fighting for important
9 issues as a whole. We know that redistricting that has
10 been a tool used in the past to weaken the voting
11 power of communities.

12 While we have seen an unfair practice when it --
13 it comes to the election on the local level, I know
14 that the federal and state lines affect us just as
15 much. We know that voter suppression is alive. We know
16 that Mississippi is capable of doing better to protect
17 [inaudible]. And Mississippi should do better. Thank
18 you.

19 MR. BECKETT: And I apologize for mispronouncing
20 your name.

21 MS. DANPORT: That's okay.

22 MR. BECKETT: All right. Uh, I thank each one of
23 you for, um, for your comments and I just, uh,
24 appreciate your attendance tonight at -- at this time,
25 I- -- I'd like to thank our -- our host for providing

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1 this place. I want to ask you [inaudible] as a
2 committee if they would -- if they has any comments
3 [inaudible].

4 BOARD MEMBER: Yeah. Well, M- -- Mr. Chairman, I
5 would -- I would like to address something that I have
6 no idea how this sound system works. That microphone
7 is on and off [inaudible]. There have been complaints
8 [inaudible], there have been complaints with other
9 meetings about the configuration of districts, which
10 split municipalities.

11 Uh, if you'll go back to the 1990 layout which
12 was after the 1980 senses, generally speaking the
13 layout that was adopted, uh, I think at 82 or
14 thereabouts, uh, did not split municipalities.
15 Generally followed county lines. You can't do that
16 exactly because of population, but -- but to a large
17 extent, you -- you can go find that out and look at
18 it.

19 Uh, when I was elected to the senate in 1983,
20 there were two African-American state senators out of
21 the 52-member senate. Uh, there were some elections,
22 uh, and so when 1990 rolled around there were four
23 African-American senators out of the 52-member senate.
24 Uh, I don't have any particular idea that voters are
25 proportional representation of whatever, would be

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1 chosen to me as troubling that you have a 52-member
2 Senate with only four black members.

3 After the census of 1990 of course we -- we trim
4 lines again. We were under the Justice Department. And
5 the Justice Department and those advocating for more
6 African-American majority districts took the position
7 more or less that in order to elect an African-
8 American [inaudible] that it require a senate district
9 that is approximately two thirds African-American.

10 And I remember having lengthy discussions with
11 the Justice Department and the individual from the
12 justice department, uh, and it's just impossible.
13 [Inaudible] what is it you want us to do? You couldn't
14 get an answer. You said clearly, uh, then [inaudible]
15 without anything, without these large numbers of
16 African-Americans in the -- the district.

17 So yeah. In order to get those numbers, districts
18 were drawn and there were insufficient number of
19 voters in compact areas. And we had one argument in
20 particular about the [inaudible]. We had a Senate
21 district and [inaudible], and a Senate district in
22 [inaudible]. And there was an assistance on the
23 justice department that, uh, a district be drawn.

24 That effectively -- [inaudible] heavily black
25 portions of [inaudible] and connect those two areas,

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1 uh, with -- with territory in-between. Leaving
2 [inaudible] portions of batches in [inaudible]? And
3 some of us thought that was, uh, an unwise thing to
4 do. But that physical demand [inaudible] the Justice
5 Department. Uh, we were told by those who were suing
6 the state at the time if they would draw districts and
7 they would present those districts to us.

8 And we were required by law to adopt the
9 districts they presented to us. That was not the law.
10 It's not the law and that's not what happened. But I
11 want to emphasize with the configuration of districts
12 that you see today [inaudible] as a result of yours
13 actions after the 1990 census and the demand that we
14 create districts with very large African-American
15 voting age populations.

16 In 1991, which is when we got the census, and we
17 had an election going on, we could not draw districts
18 that got approved by the Justice Department if there
19 was the lawsuit. And -- and ultimately what happened
20 was we were in 1991 out of the existing districts and
21 had another election in 1992. Generally speaking, the
22 same map that you see today is a variation on the same
23 map that was drawn in 1992 and [inaudible] comply with
24 the requirements of the Voting Rights Act.

25 And we adopted a different ~~124~~ diff- -- different

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1 paths, obviously in 2000 and 2010 and not 2020. With
2 configurations all that you're seeing today come about
3 in large measure as a result of the effects of the,
4 uh, efforts after the 1990 census. Um, there've been
5 allusions to the fact that this is something that the
6 Republican party is doing. Well, let me do it. The
7 Republican party has a lot to explain.

8 And we can talk about that [inaudible] however,
9 [inaudible]. This was not the land of the Republican
10 Party. I think they saw what was happening and sort of
11 [inaudible] themselves. Uh, but this was a demand, uh,
12 of people who wish to draw districts with large
13 African-American populations.

14 And I remember distinctly the -- the -- the
15 African-American, uh, citizens of different
16 communities were a community of interest and that the
17 city or county or whatever was not a community
18 interests, community interests were the African-
19 American residents where they have [inaudible]. So,
20 uh, I feel like there needs to be some explanation of
21 how we got the configurations that we added today?
22 Basically that's where they from. Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman.

24 MR. BECKETT: All right. [Inaudible].

25 MALE: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At

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1 first, we'll take it up. Senator Brian's offer to
2 discuss Republican and Democrat, uh, differences if
3 you'd like to then. Um, no, seriously, clearly under
4 the hearings, uh, split precincts are an issue they've
5 been in every one of the meetings.

6 Uh, I with the release of the data that has come
7 out, I guess it was yesterday or two days ago, I think
8 your counties and your cities are going to start
9 looking at that closer. And I personally had, as
10 recently as today, conversation with the county
11 administrator in Pearl River County, who, uh,
12 rightfully so mentioned about the split -- the issues
13 they have with split county districts. I of course
14 explained as the chairman has said, how -- that --
15 what the state's role within the county [inaudible].

16 The bottom line is in -- what was it came down to
17 it was, uh, communication is needed to -- to -- to do
18 our best on the local level to prevent as many split
19 precincts as possible. And his suggestion was to
20 communicate with the counties or actually even said,
21 let their -- look at their -- how they, uh, district
22 with the new numbers and then let us do ours. I didn't
23 know all the logistics, but I said, I think that can
24 be solved or certainly, uh, addressed during
25 communication.

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1 But it also, as we discussed would be about the
2 counties and the cities going ahead and getting
3 started and getting it in as soon as possible. I see -
4 - seeing none of which I think the earlier the better,
5 which is what you had said. Because, um, we, as the
6 state are under a timeline and for example, to their
7 credit Pearl River County said, they've already
8 started and they're going to have their districts.

9 And I personally, um, encouraged them to go ahead
10 and send them to us so that we can start looking at
11 it. And we will do our best to, you know, from our
12 end, from our side to -- to minimize the split
13 precincts and the split, uh, split county districts.
14 So, um, I think that's important.

15 Uh, I think that that's certainly not a partisan
16 issue, whether it's Republican, Democrat or
17 Independent, we've heard throughout the state how --
18 what problems split precincts are. And if we can -- I
19 think it's imperative upon the committee if -- to
20 entertain suggestions that can help minimize that.

21 And so just in conclusion, if -- if the counties
22 and the cities can get started as soon as possible, I
23 don't know all the logistics, but they can start
24 working and talk with us. I think the chairman would
25 agree that we're certainly open. And as a council has

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1 said, the process is starting and it's open to the
2 public and open to anybody. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

3 MR. BECKETT: Yeah. I want to just follow up on
4 that. The supervisor association is well aware about
5 what the problem is, and we've had discussions with
6 them [inaudible]. But there was a -- we had an extra
7 problem this year [inaudible] we were supposed to
8 receive the census information, April 5th, and we're
9 still waiting on the official information.

10 So the counties have not had the information, so
11 they were not able to start [inaudible] extremely
12 difficult timelines for all of them. Some of them
13 [inaudible]. But it's going to be hard for all of
14 them, but ~~it's~~ but they know that -- they have committed
15 as a group [inaudible] to -- to minimize that.

16 MALE: Yeah. And that's why I'm saying if they
17 can get it started as soon as possible doing that,
18 that makes our job that much easier, which then helps
19 us to minimize the split or splits.

20 MR. BECKETT: Right. Mrs. [inaudible]?

21 FEMALE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now [inaudible]
22 question that I'd like to direct to, I think it's Mr.
23 Lawrence?

24 MR. BECKETT: Yes, ma'am.

25 FEMALE: Um, as you were describing your -- the

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1 math that you presented I think you referred -- you
2 referenced the rules that are listed here at the
3 bottom. So my first question to you would be, what is
4 the source of the rules that you're presenting, uh,
5 for consideration [inaudible]?

6 MR. BECKETT: Uh, [inaudible]. I -- I guess I
7 came up [inaudible].

8 FEMALE: And -- and this is not a trick question.
9 I'm really -- I'm wondering if this part of some study
10 or this is based on your independent research?

11 MR. BECKETT: Well, partly. And, uh, and I know
12 this isn't a very popular thing to say around here,
13 but actually, uh, the person who drew the California
14 districting map actually took a class with them back
15 in the day and sort of these ideas [inaudible] from
16 that. I disagree with them on a lot of things like
17 [inaudible] Nancy Pelosi's district, for instance,
18 it's a little messed up. But, um, I would like to also
19 push back a little bit on the idea that, sorry to
20 interrupt your question.

21 FEMALE: No.

22 MR. LUKE: Just a little bit on the idea that,
23 oh, this is all just a result of the federal
24 government came in and made us draw these maps this
25 way. This was a compromise with the federal government

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1 to draw these maps [inaudible]. They didn't just come
2 down and tell you [inaudible] the committee
3 compromised with the federal government. And I can
4 point out specific examples of what I'm talking about
5 and draw your attention to the federal Wiggins'
6 district for instance.

7 You tell me that splitting Pascagoula and Moss
8 Point [inaudible] that there's more African-Americans
9 in the district. Please, that's not true. Um, there
10 are other ones like the one in, uh, East Gulf Port,
11 Joel Partner's [ph] district. There's no way the East
12 Gulf Port combining that with, uh, Lyman area in
13 [inaudible] means that there's going to be more
14 African-Americans in the district.

15 That's just wrong. And so whether the history of
16 it is more muddled than maybe I've been led on, uh, in
17 my presentation earlier, whether or not it's more
18 complicated. We can look at specific examples and
19 nobody in their right mind could look at the map of
20 Jackson and say, that map is drawn to concentrate
21 African-American votes. Please, nobody can believe it.

22 FEMALE: Luke, let me ask in one more question.

23 MR. LUKE: Yes.

24 FEMALE: In your research, have you also
25 formulated a proposed map of the center districts or

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1 [inaudible]?

2 MR. LUKE: Well, as much as I would love to do
3 that. I -- I -- I currently don't have access to GIS
4 technology. Although I think the geography department
5 [inaudible] maybe I could use it. I also have -- have
6 a very kind of full-time job and, you know, it's hard
7 to come up with things like that. But Hey, I mean, you
8 don't [inaudible].

9 FEMALE: I was just wondering about [inaudible]
10 and I was just wondering about this [inaudible].

11 MR. LUKE: Well, I would -- I would love to
12 continue to discuss it [inaudible]. I -- I appreciate
13 your question.

14 MR. BECKETT: [Inaudible] any other committee
15 member that has a question? All right. Once again, I
16 want -- I want to thank you [inaudible] for being here
17 and I'm sure some of these conversations will continue
18 a- -- a- -- afterwards.

19 Uh, I want -- I want to thank, uh, [inaudible]
20 question for hosting us this evening and providing
21 this place. Uh, thank our staff once again, for all
22 the work in -- in preparation and submitting and
23 [inaudible] we're just in the beginning of this
24 process and that, uh, you may provide any comments or
25 suggestions for proposal -- proposed plans by mail.

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1 Uh, and you can mail those to Ted Booth, staff
2 counsel, joint reapportionment committee, PO Box 1204,
3 Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1204. Or you can email to -
4 - to ted.booth@peer that's p-e-e-r.ms.gov.

5 And I said before, uh, please put your contact
6 information on there so that you can follow up with --
7 with the comments that you [inaudible], um, and if you
8 have nothing else then, uh, this -- this meeting with
9 stand adjourned.

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1

2

3 I, Chris Naaden, a transcriber, hereby declare
4 under penalty of perjury that to the best of my
5 ability the above 49 pages contain a full, true and
6 correct transcription of the tape-recording that I
7 received regarding the event listed on the caption on
8 page 1.

9

10 I further declare that I have no interest in the
11 event of the action.

12

13 August 31, 2021

14 Chris Naaden

15

16

17

18 (Standing Joint Congressional Redistricting Committee,
19 Hattiesburg, 8-19-21)

20

21

22

23

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25

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STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Hearing on 08/19/2021

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BETTY CARLISLE
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

August 19, 2021

Standing Joint Legislative Committee on Reapportionment and Redistricting
P.O. Box 1204
Jackson, MS 39215

Re: 2020 Census Redistricting Hearings

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Roderick Wouillard. I am a native of Hattiesburg and have served as the District 4 Supervisor for Forrest County since 2001. In 2005, I was the lead plaintiff in an ultimately unsuccessful challenge to the Legislative redistricting plan adopted after the 2000 census. Our goal in pursuing that litigation was, as it is now, an effort to create a majority-minority Senate district centered in Hattiesburg, the second largest majority-minority community in the State of Mississippi.

While the Legislative redistricting plan adopted after the 2010 census did create a majority-minority Senate district including parts of Hattiesburg, Senate District 34 was simply not what the doctor ordered from the perspective of our community. Specifically, Senate District 34 as adopted unnecessarily diluted the voting strength of minority voters in the city while ignoring other important traditional redistricting criteria such as compactness, adherence to existing political boundaries, and preservation of communities of interest. Inexplicably, large majority-minority precincts in the city such as Blair and Dixie Pine-Central and minority-influence precincts such as Highland Park, Pinecrest, and Westside were assigned to Senate District 45, carving out over a third of the black voting age population in the city. Instead of coupling all of the city's minority-majority precincts with others in the Hattiesburg metropolitan area, the Legislature yoked our community with rural minority voters in Jasper County over two county lines and 40 miles away. As a result, minority voters in Hattiesburg constituted only 22% of the Senate District 34 electorate and have been scarcely able to influence, much less determine, the election of their state Senator. This is simply unacceptable for a community with a population of over half the ideal Senate district size.

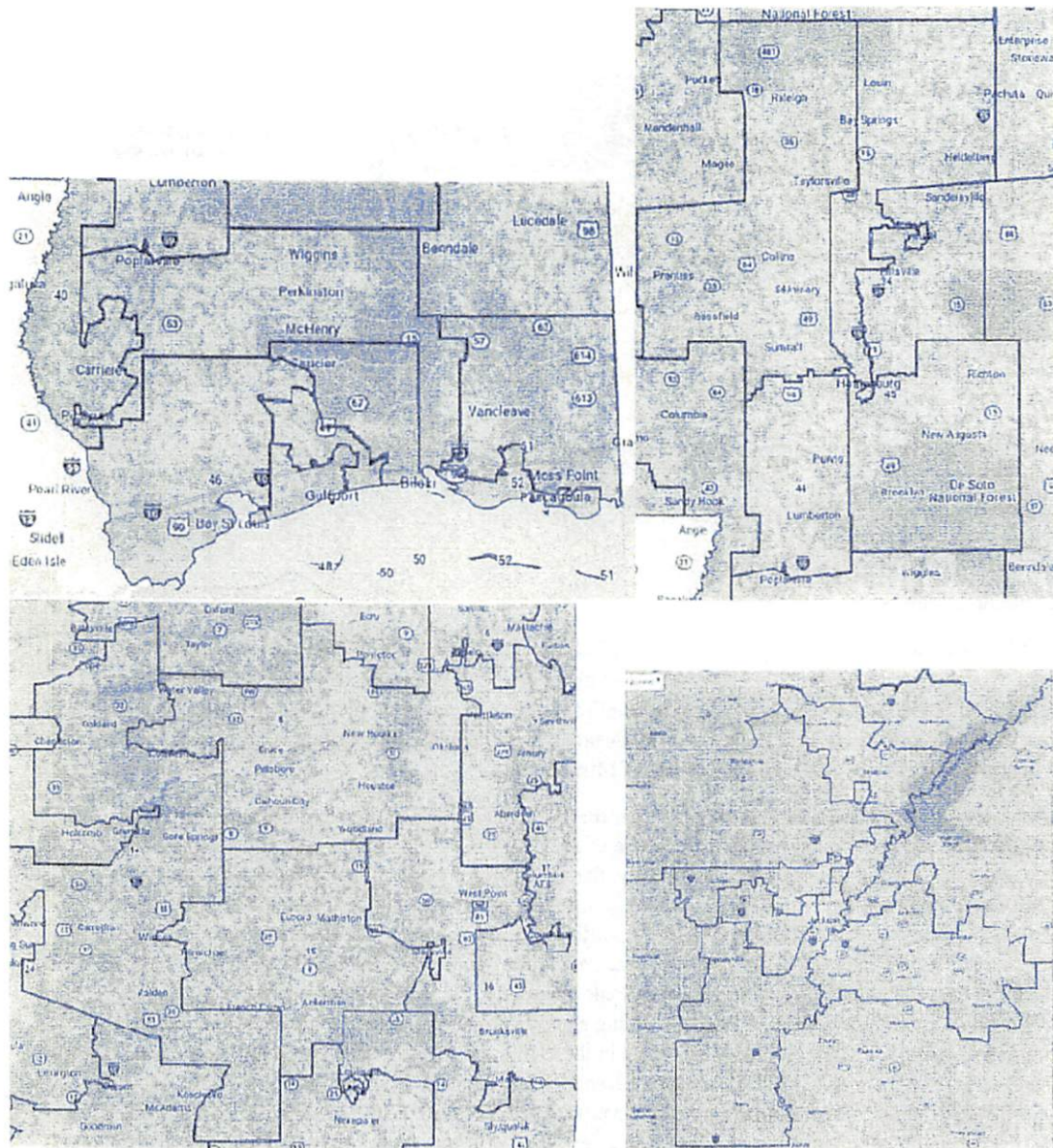
Accordingly, please accept this letter as my formal request on behalf of the community I represent to adopt a majority-minority Senate District centered on the city of Hattiesburg consistent with the mandates of the U.S. Constitution and traditional redistricting principles. I appreciate your time, attention, and consideration in this vitally important matter and stand ready to offer whatever assistance the Committee may request to that end.

Sincerely,


Roderick Wouillard

SDT-SJLCRR-000377

JTX-029-073



THREE RULES TO FIX THIS MADNESS

1. A municipality that has enough people to contain an entire district shall contain as many whole districts as its population will maintain. NO DIVIDING BIG CITIES INTO FRAGMENTS!!
2. A municipality that has fewer than the number of people for an entire district shall be contained in one single district whenever possible and in districts with adjacent unincorporated areas. KEEP SMALL CITIES WITHIN THE SAME DISTRICT!!
3. Unincorporated areas, even those in different counties, shall be contained in districts with other unincorporated areas whenever possible and in districts with adjacent municipalities otherwise. KEEP RURAL AREAS TOGETHER!!

SDT-SJLCRR-000378

JTX-029-074